

Prison Research and Innovation Network Vermont Prison Climate Surveys: 2022

Legislative Testimony
House Committee on Corrections and Institutions
January 20, 2023

go.uvm.edu/justiceresearch

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THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
JUSTICE RESEARCH INITIATIVE

Outline

1. PRIN in Vermont
2. VT PRIN Surveys
3. 2022 VT PRIN Survey Results
 - Orientation to the full data reports
 - Summary of key findings 2022 vs 2021
4. Next Steps



PRIN in Vermont

- Timeline, application Fall 2019 & project launch Jan 2020
- Pilot facility, Southern State Correctional Facility (SSCF)
- Research Partner, UVM
- PRIM, VTDOC Project Manager
- Steering Committee: SSCF, VTDOC, UVM, Urban
- Executive Committee: legislators, advocates, directly impacted, and more



PRIN Research

Data-driven: understand the issues & measure the impact of innovations

- Independent research partner
- Community-engaged
- Mixed-methods
 - Focus groups, interviews, field notes
 - Surveys, administrative data



PRIN Research - Surveys

Development

- March 2020 – March 2021
- Focus groups and interviews with SSCF staff and incarcerated individuals
 - SSCF community research advisors
 - Incorporate validated instruments
 - Subset of questions measured across all 5 states
- Executive & steering committee engagement



PRIN Research - Surveys

Instruments

- 2 surveys, 1 for staff and 1 for incarcerated individuals
- Likert or yes/no questions
- Correctional staff survey: 125+ questions
- Incarcerated individuals survey: 150+ questions

VERMONT PRIN – STAFF SURVEY v3.0

Thank you for taking the PRIN survey! We greatly appreciate your completing the survey in its entirety, but as a reminder you can skip any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

Please respond to each question or statement by marking one box per row.

Job Satisfaction		Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
1	I look forward to coming to work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
2	I take pride in my job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	It is clear what it means to be successful in my job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I have the skills I need to do my job well here.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Leadership in this prison shows appreciation for staff in meaningful ways.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	My supervisors are invested/interested in my career path and help me achieve my career goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Promotions in this prison are done fairly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	If I have a chance, I will change to some other job outside of corrections at the same rate of pay.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Staff in this prison are fairly compensated for the duties and tasks they are required to perform.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Consider the Department of Corrections overall ("central office")		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
10	The Department communicates a clear vision (mission) for Corrections.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	There are discussions involving all staff about the vision for Corrections and ways to achieve it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	The Department has a clear understanding of what it's like for staff to work in this prison.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	The Department takes the things I say seriously and treats me and my ideas with respect.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Vermont PRIN – STAFF SURVEY March 15, 2022

1



Prison Research - Surveys

Administration

- Wave 1: Identify the priority issues for change (June 2021)
- **Wave 2: How is it going? (June 2022)**
- Wave 3: Did it work? (2024)



Prison Research - Surveys

Response Rates & Sharing Data with SSCF (and beyond)

- Staff response rates: 2021 70%, **2022 65%**
- Incarcerated individuals response rates: 2021 70%, **2022 72%**
- Data Walks: Nov 2021, Oct 2022
- Press Release: Jan 2022, Jan 2023
- **Data Reports : go.uvm.edu/justiceresearch**



Prison Research – 2022 Survey Results

Availability of data reports

- Full results report
- Summary results report

go.uvm.edu/justiceresearch

Prison Research and Innovation Network (PRIN)

Through a research-practice partnership, UVM and the Vermont Department of Corrections, in collaboration with the Urban Institute, are engaged in a network of five states focused on making prisons more transparent and improving the wellbeing of correctional staff and incarcerated individuals. The network emphasizes an “inside-out” approach to systems change, using participatory research methods involving people who work, or are incarcerated, in correctional facilities. In Vermont, pilot efforts are focused in the Southern State Correctional Facility (SSCF), Springfield VT. This project is funded by Arnold Ventures Foundation as a core component of the Urban Institute’s [Prison Research and Innovation Initiative](#).

- [2022 PRIN survey - full results \(PDF\)](#)
- [2021 PRIN survey - full results\(PDF\)](#)
- [2022 vs 2021 PRIN survey - summary results \(PDF\)](#)



Prison Research – 2022 Survey Results

2022 Full results report, orientation

- 44 pages
- About & Overview
- Staff, demographics + 11 content sections
- Incarcerated individuals, demographics + 16 content sections



Prison Research – 2022 Survey Results

2022 Full results report , orientation - overview

PRIN Surveys - 2022 Overview

This report details the full 2022 survey results for the VT-PRIN study. Many of the findings did not significantly change from the 2021 results. To help highlight areas of potential change we have flagged each question on the 2022 survey results where there was a statistically significant, or trend towards statistical significance, change from the 2021 results. These flags are based on average scale differences between the two years, and may or may not represent meaningful changes.

- There is a red box next to the questions where there was a negative change (i.e., things got worse).
- There is a green box next to the questions where there was a positive change (i.e., things got better).

Survey questions are presented in the order that they were asked on the survey itself. It's important to note that the survey was largely unchanged between 2021 and 2022, with the exception of a slight difference in questions and order related to Covid-19.



Prison Research – 2022 Survey Results

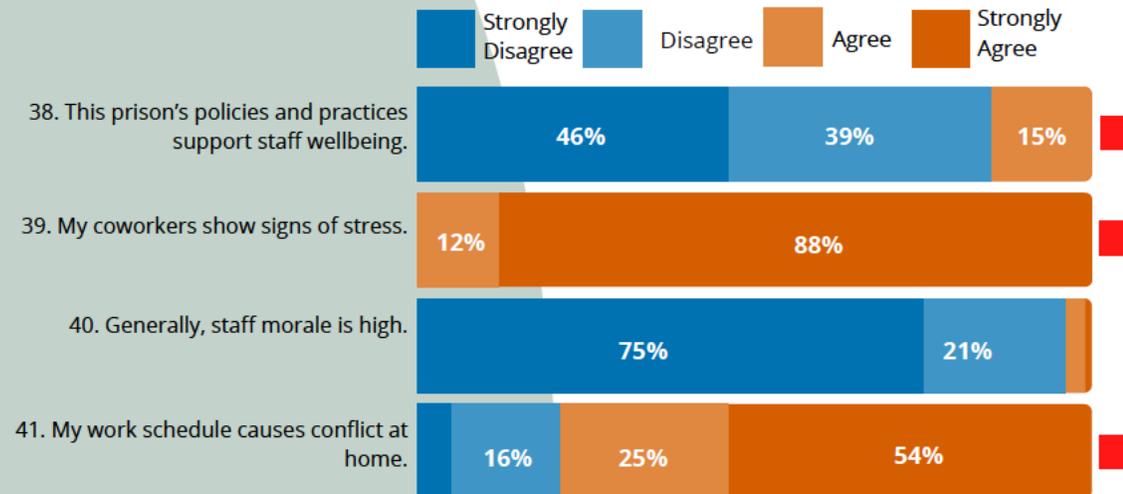
2022 Full results report , orientation - overview example

STAFF - 2022



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WORKPLACE CULTURE, Continued (4/4)



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Prison Research – 2022 Survey Results

2022 Full results report, orientation - overview staff findings

- Pages numbered 1 - 18
- Sections: demographics, job satisfaction, central office, workplace culture, staff health, trauma, purpose of prison, prison conditions, staff-incarcerated interactions, correctional practices & sanctions, covid-19, MAT program.



Prison Research – 2022 Survey Results

2022 Full results report, orientation - overview incarcerated findings

- Pages numbered 19 - 41
- Sections: demographics, prison conditions & environment, commissary, purpose of prison, perceptions of personal safety, prison culture, correctional staff & practices, discipline & grievance procedures, planning for release, prison activities, medical and mental healthcare, MAT program, health & wellbeing, contact with family and friends, trauma, adverse childhood experiences, covid-19



Prison Research – 2022 Survey Results

Summary results report, key findings 2022 vs 2021

Staff priority areas

1. Staffing
2. Job Satisfaction
3. Health and Wellbeing

Incarcerated priority areas

1. Planning for release
2. Healthcare services
3. Commissary
4. Prison Activities



Prison Research – 2022 Survey Results

Summary results report, key findings 2022 vs 2021

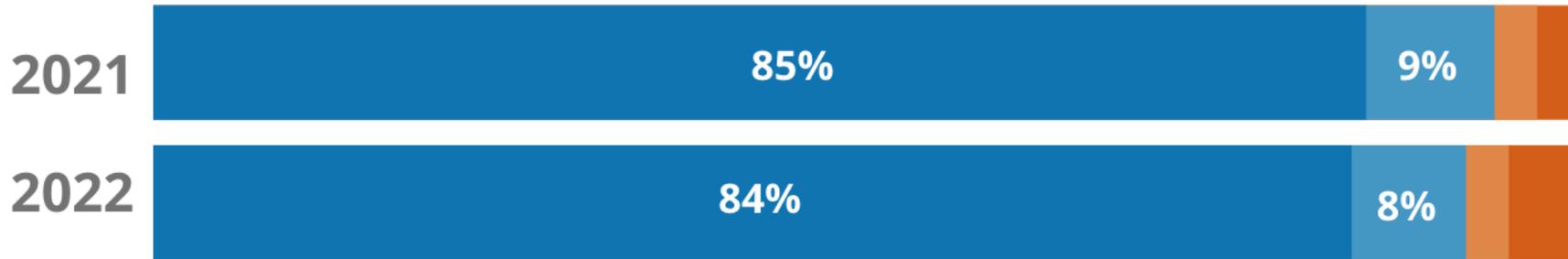
STAFF



Results: Staffing



There are enough staff to meet the current needs of this prison.

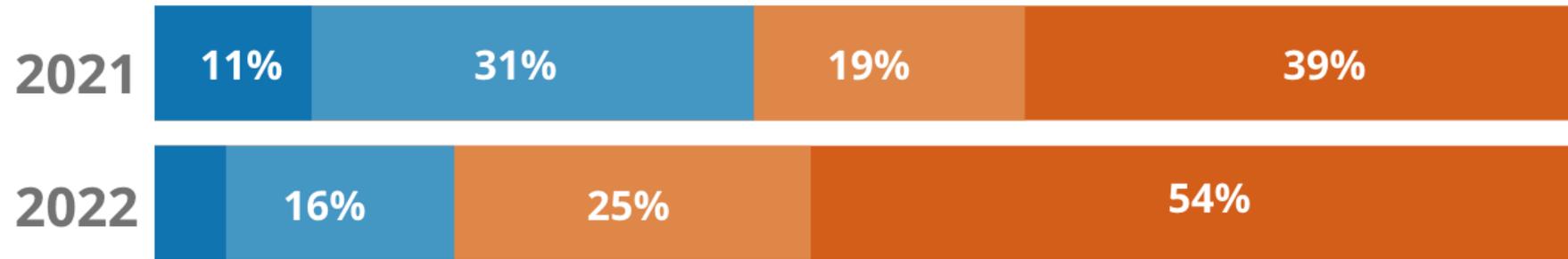


“We are human. We have lives. The 16’s are destroying our personal lives and relationships. Help us. We need help.”

Results: Staffing



My work schedule causes conflict at home.



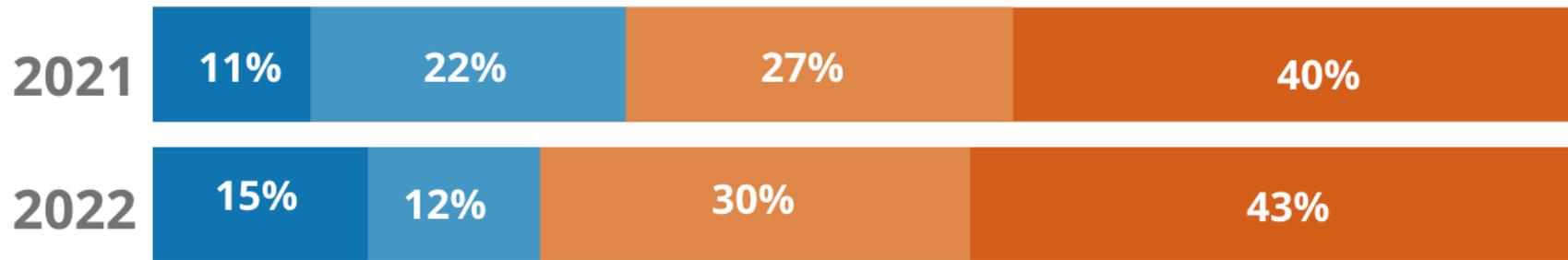
My coworkers show signs of stress.



Results: Job Satisfaction



If I have a chance, I will change to some other job outside of corrections at the same rate of pay

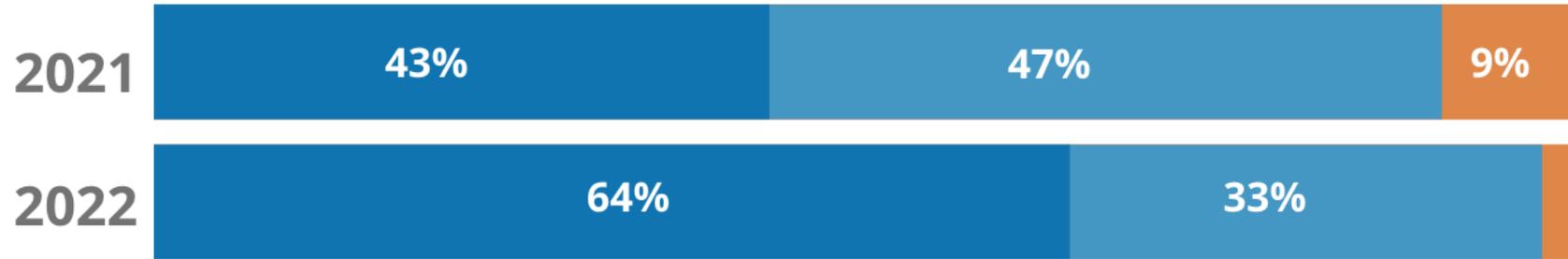


“We are underpaid, understaffed, and over worked.”

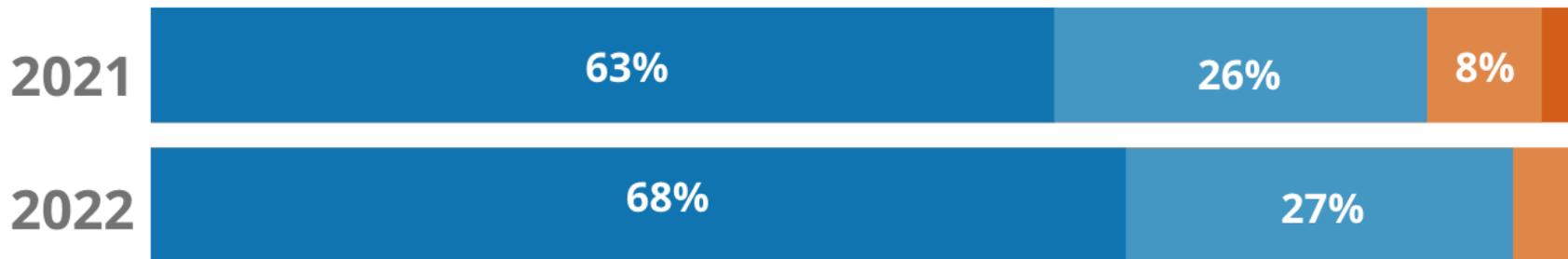
Results: Job Satisfaction



When changes are made in this prison that affect me, I am included in the process.

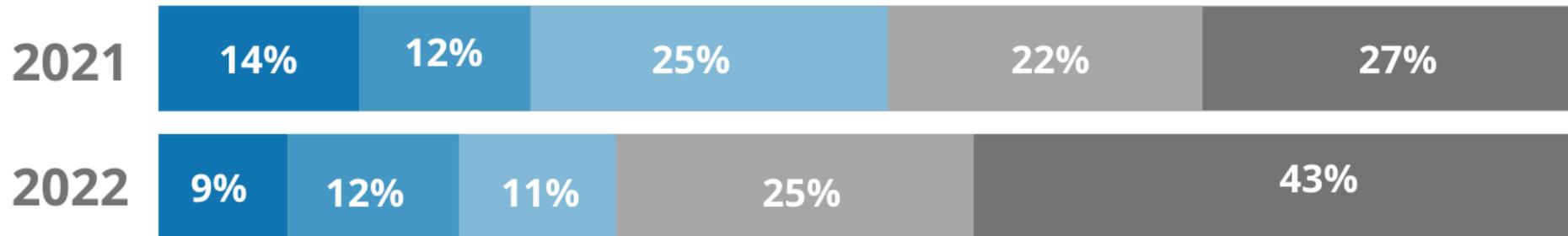


The Department has a clear understanding of what it's like for staff to work in this prison.



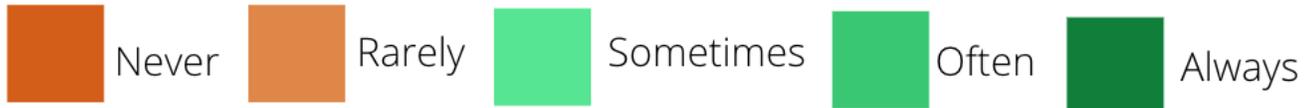
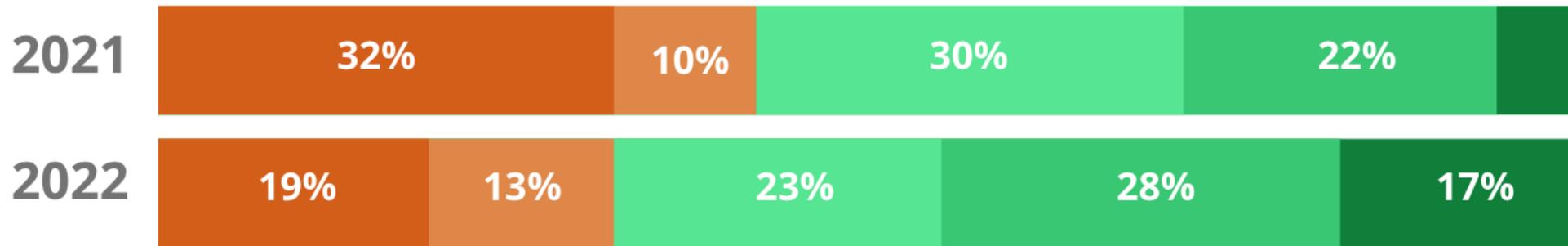
Results: Health & Wellbeing

In general, how would you rate your satisfaction with your social activities and relationships?



Results: Health & Wellbeing

In the past 7 days, I felt depressed.



Results: Health & Wellbeing

At any time in the last 12 months did you seriously think about trying to kill yourself?

2021: 10% yes ➔ **2022: 30% yes**

“The stress levels are pushing people over the edge.”



Prison Research – 2022 Survey Results

Summary results report, key findings 2022 vs 2021

INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS



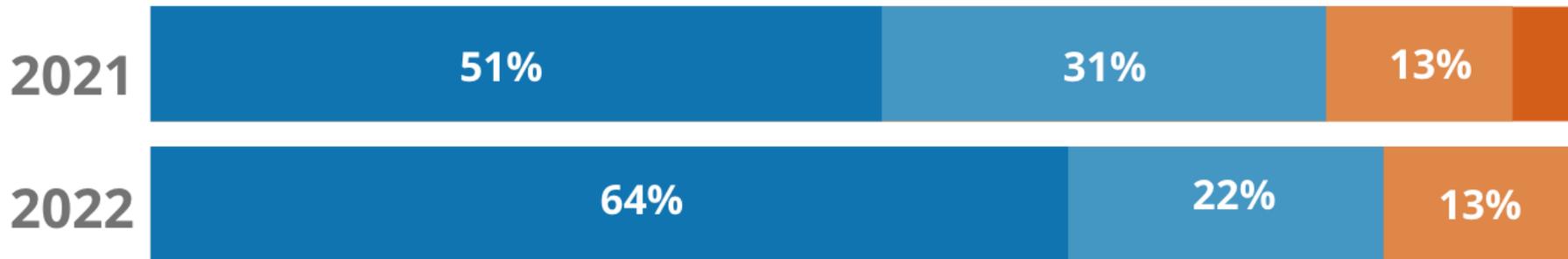
Results: Planning for Release



This prison does a good job preparing people for release.



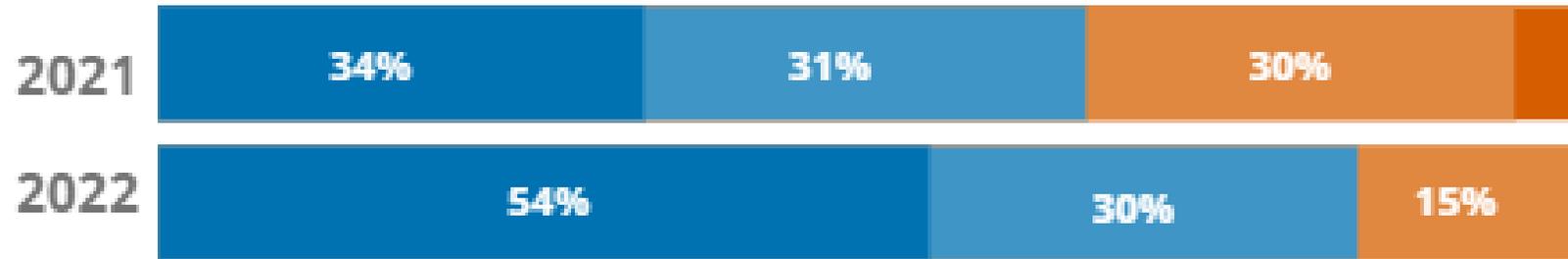
The programs in this facility give me the skills I need to be successful on the outside.



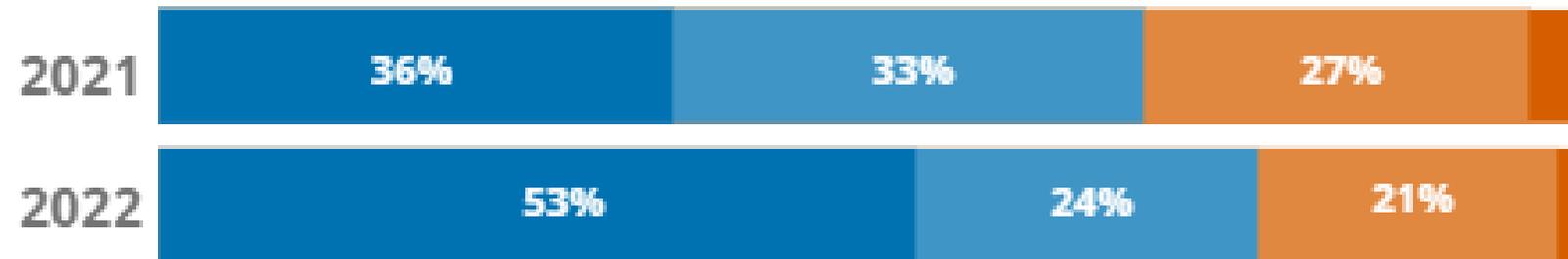
Results: Healthcare Services



I get the medical treatment I need in this prison, when I need it.



I get the mental health care/treatment I need in this prison, when I need it.



Results: Healthcare Services

 Strongly Disagree

 Disagree

 Agree

 Strongly Agree

At any time in the last 12 months did you seriously think about trying to kill yourself?

2021: 36% yes



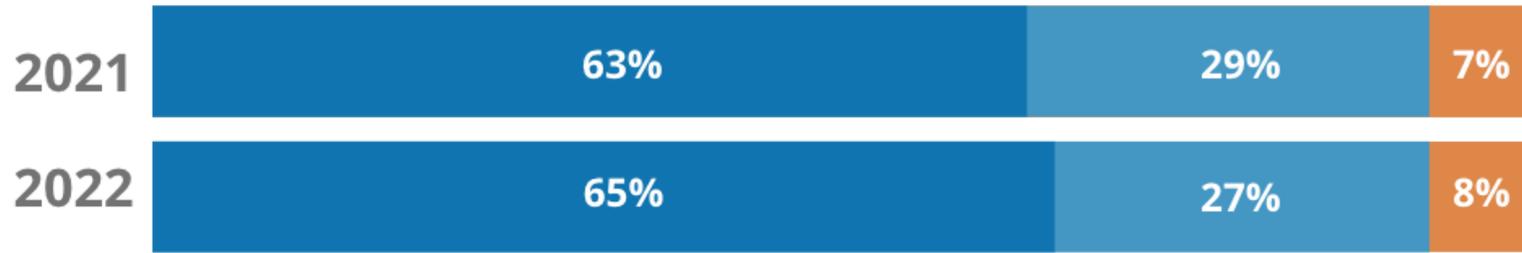
2022: 37% yes



Results: Commissary



There are enough outside vendors to choose from.



There are enough options for things to buy.



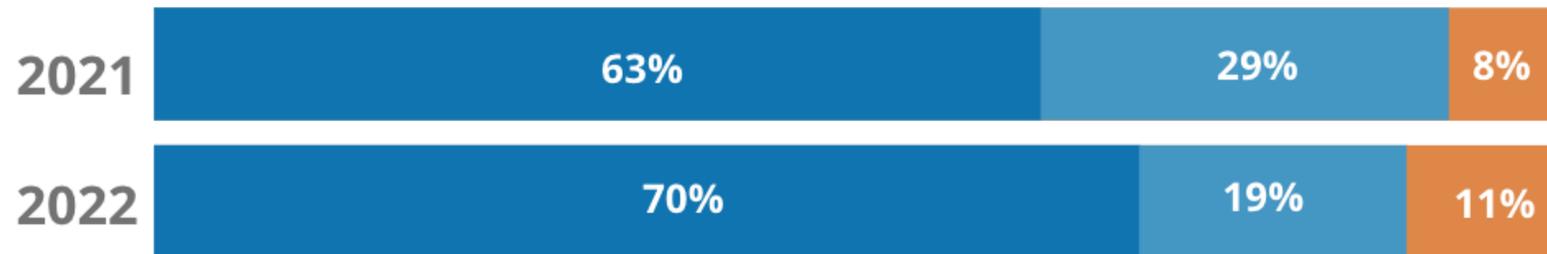
Results: Commissary



The quality of the available items is good.



The costs are reasonable



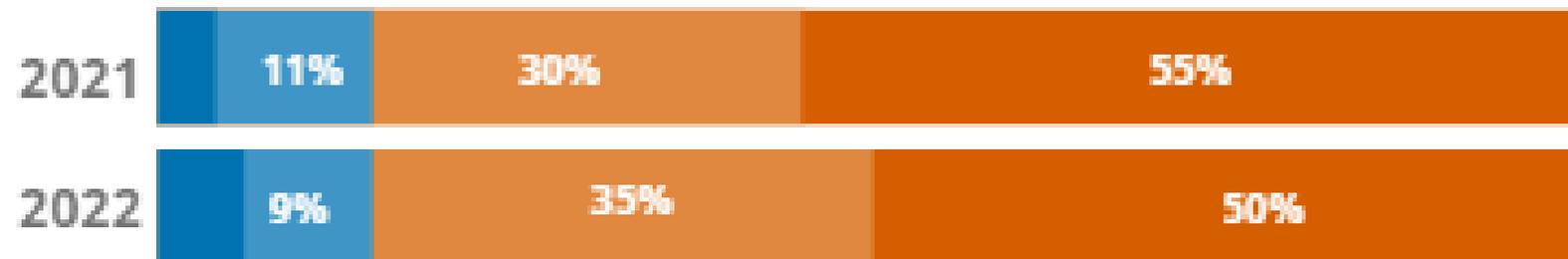
Results: Prison Activities



I have access to activities that promote well-being and growth.



There are a lot of times when there is nothing productive (or meaningful) for me to do.



Results: Prison Activities



This prison gives me opportunities to feel proud and accomplished.



Research, next steps

- Two years remaining: wave 3 (final) survey in 2024
- Qualitative focus groups, interviews, and field notes
- Use data to create awareness and support action
- Opportunities to connect with broader conversations on role of corrections in advancing public safety, accountability, and rehabilitation.



Thank you!

Full & summary survey results available online:

go.uvm.edu/justiceresearch

